

Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce

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USDA AWARDS MARKETING GRANT TO MISSISSIPPI

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce \$65,650 in federal funds to support the state's "Make Mine Mississippi" agricultural marketing and education program.

The grant, provided under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program, was awarded to MDAC in cooperation with the Hinds Community College Small Business Development Center and International Trade Center. The grant will help fund business and financial training assistance for over 600 member companies of the **"Make Mine Mississippi"** program.

"The intensive business training which this grant will permit comes at a critical time economically for companies across our state. Our "Make Mine Mississippi" logo-identification program has helped in the creation more than 780 jobs this year statewide because of increased sales of our quality Mississippi products. Having access to business resources and knowing how to use them will help in making sure that our "Make Mine Mississippi" businesses continue to grow," said Commissioner of Agriculture, Dr. Lester Spell, Jr. "Developing a good product and marketing it successfully is one thing; running the businesses successfully is another. In this we can all benefit."

In announcing the award, Bill Hawks, a Mississippi native and USDA's under secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs said, "Agriculturally related businesses are an important part of Mississippi's growing economy, and promoting Mississippi products - throughout the state, the nation, and the rest of the world - will benefit all of the state's citizens."

"It's a sound formula for success: Federal-state partnerships like this grant awarded to the "Make Mine Mississippi" program provides financial incentives to help fledgling home-grown agricultural businesses prosper and create jobs," Hawks concluded.

"Make Mine Mississippi" is a voluntary marketing program designed to increase the sales of Mississippi-made products, especially those from agri-business. Since it was established in 1999, the program has grown to over 629 members. The federal grant will be used to develop conferences, workshops, and distance education courses to enhance member businesses. According to the proposal, the goals of the training are to encourage program membership throughout the state; to help businesses continue to grow and be more competitive through quality business training and information; to help businesses become financially healthy by introducing them to resources for expansion capital, equipment and other business needs; and to link them to local, regional, national and international markets.

Mississippi is one of 25 states in fiscal year 2001 to receive one of the competitively awarded marketing improvement grants. The last time a grant of this type was awarded to Mississippi was in 1993.